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ABSTRACT

This report summarized the results of a 5-year research investigation of the anti- and prosocial effects of television on children. At the outset of the investigation the focus of emphasis was on analyzing the possible antisocial effects of television on children, but about midway through the project the research was expanded to include possible prosocial effects of television on children. In the study, roughly 10,000 children in the 8 to 13 year old age range from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds were used as subjects in a variety of experiments. The net conclusion of the antisocial experiments was that under certain conditions and depending on the types of violence portrayed, exposure to televised violence is capable of producing increased inclination toward aggression in children. (HAB)

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SUMMARY

FIVE YEAR ABC RESEARCH PROJECT "ANTI-SOCIAL AND PRO-SOCIAL EFFECTS OF TELEVISION ON CHILDREN"

LIEBERMAN RESEARCH, INC.

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OVERVIEW

FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF RESEARCH SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY

Introduction

This report summarizes the results of a 3-year research investigation of the anti- and pro-social effects of television on children. The research program spans the period 1970 through 1975.

At the outset of the research investigation, the focus of emphasis was on analyzing the possible anti-social effects of television on children. This involved a continuing study of the extent to which and the conditions under which exposure to violent material on television leads to increased inclination toward aggression. The results of the individual anti-social experiments are summarized in this report.

About midway through the 3-year period the research was expanded to include a study of possible pro-social effects of television on children. This entailed examining the extent to which and the conditions under which exposure to television characters portraying various types of roles affects children's social perceptions. More specifically, this took the form of determining the extent to which children's perception of ethnic groups, men and women, younger and older people, and those engaged in various occupations are influenced by programs depicting characters in these population segments. Of particular interest was an examination of the extent to which negative social stereotypes are reduced or curtailed by exposure to such material. The results of the individual pro-social experiments are also summarized in this report.

In the Five Year Study roughly 10,000 children in the 8-13 year old age bracket were used. Half of the children were in the 8-10 year old category with the other half in the 11-13 year old group. The children were from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, ranging from lower class to upper middle class, mostly white with some blacks and Puerto Ricans and were from the New York, Connecticut and New Jersey area. They were contacted through a variety of public, private and parochial schools as well as various boys clubs.

Boys were primarily used for the anti-social studies while both boys and girls were used in the pro-social experiments.

Different procedures were used in both the anti-social and pro-social experiments. In the anti-social experiments an Electronic Pounding

Platform (EPP) was used as the instrument to measure pre-post changes in inclination toward aggression. Basically it worked in the following way: children would hit the EPP before and after exposure to a violent (or non-violent) program and changes in force of the hit were recorded. The pre-post changes in scores were used as a measure of the extent to which exposure to a television program increased or decreased inclination toward aggression. The greater the positive pre-post change score, the more a program was judged to increase inclination toward aggression. The smaller the positive pre-post change score, the less a program was determined to increase inclination toward aggression.

The EPP was used in two types of analysis. First it was used to measure the overall effects of exposure to programs. Secondly, it was used to measure the impact of individual violent scenes (types of violence, differences in scene length, etc.) on the inclination toward aggression. The term "inclination toward aggression" must be regarded as a theoretical construct throughout the study, however. Within the laboratory conditions of the study it was not possible (as it was not possible for any previous study done in this area) to determine a causal relationship between "inclination towards aggression" and actual aggression, in whatever form.

The EPP is described in greater detail in Appendix B.

In the pro-social experiments children rated various groups on an image dimension questionnaire. The image dimensions consisted of a series of nine paired adjective descriptions (hard-working/lazy, smart/dumb, friendly/unfriendly, strong/weak, honest/dishonest, brave/scared, clean/dirty, leaders/followers, good/bad). Each category was on a 7-point scale with the positive end of the dimension on one side and the negative end of the dimension on the other. Children completed a questionnaire before and after exposure to programs. The pre-post changes in image ratings of a group served as a measure of the extent to which exposure to a program altered children's perceptions.

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIMENTS (ANTI-SOCIAL)

OVERALL RESULTS

The Effect of Televised Violence on Inclination Toward Aggression

CONCLUSIONS

Under certain conditions and depending on the types of violence portrayed, exposure to televised violence is capable of producing increased inclination toward aggression in children.

DISCUSSION

This is based on a series of experimental studies, conducted under laboratory conditions, in which pre-post increases in inclination toward aggression were found to be associated with exposure to violent elements in television programs. These findings are consistent with other studies which have shown that under laboratory conditions, exposure to televised violence generates increased inclination toward aggression.

LIMITATIONS

In evaluating the results, two major limitations should be noted:

1. Studies are one-shot, short-term effects and not multi-exposure, long-term.

2. Studies dealt with effects in laboratory conditions, rather than a natural setting. Therefore, as with all other studies previously conducted by others, no actual correlation between program content and actual commission of violence could be established.

ACTION-ADVENTURE PROGRAMS

PURPOSE

The purpose was twofold: (a) to measure the impact of current ABC action-adventure programs on the inclination toward aggression in children, (b) to determine differences between a high violence program previously broadcast on ABC and current programs.

PROCEDURE

Selected current programs were shown to children and a pre-post EPP test was given. At the same time a test was performed on an episode from "The Untouchables," a high-violence program from the 1962-63 season used as a benchmark.

RESULTS

On the average, the programs studied generated less (less than half) inclination toward aggression than the benchmark program. Nonetheless, while the levels of aggression generated in the programs were lower than the benchmark program, these programs still produced an increase in inclination toward aggression as a result of exposure to the programs.

DISCUSSION

There was a wide range of impact produced by various action-adventure programs tested. For example, "The Rookies" and "Caribe" generated high inclination toward aggression. "The Streets of San Francisco" and "Night Stalker" yielded intermediate increases in inclination toward aggression. Others, such as "Toma: and "Harry O" produced little increase in inclination toward aggression. These differences were attributed to qualitative differences in the violence in the programs. However, while some of these programs generated increases in inclination toward aggression, none exceeded the level of inclination toward aggression generated by the benchmark program.

IMPLICATIONS

There has been significant reduction of violent elements in action-adventure programs.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

PURPOSE

The purpose was twofold: (a) to measure the impact of current ABC children's programs on an inclination toward aggression; (b) to determine differences between a high violence children's program, previously broadcast on ABC.

PROCEDURE

Selected programs were shown to children and a pre-post EPP test was given. At the same time, a test was performed using an episode from "Johnny Quest" as a high violence benchmark program from the 1971-72 season.

RESULTS

The children's programs studied generated little increase in inclination toward aggression. Also, they generated less inclination toward aggression than the benchmark.

DISCUSSION

Overall the children's programs studied generated little increase in inclination toward aggression. However, there were some exceptions among particular programs. For example, the program "Devlin" generated a high level of inclination toward aggression. However, because it didn't contain physical violence, the increased aggression was attributed to the fact that the boys identified strongly with the young character (Evel Knievel-type character) going across the Snake River Canyon. Therefore, as other findings also indicate, anxiety or tension and not just overt physical violence is capable of producing increased inclination toward aggression.

This is duplicated in other children's programs. For example, in "Kid Power," "Yogi's Gang," and "Hammerman," there was an increase in inclination toward aggression. Though none of these programs contained violence the children exhibited an increase in anxiety or tension resulting from confrontations with threatening adult (or near adult) characters. It is hypothesized that this anxiety or tension may, in turn, have translated itself into increased levels of inclination toward aggression.

IMPLICATIONS

The sharp reduction in inclination toward aggression produced during the three years studied suggests that ABC has made a conscious effort to reduce the amount of violence depicted in children's programs.

Also, because it appears that many other elements in a program produce inclination toward aggression, e.g., anxiety, tension, identification, etc., ABC may have discarded programs unnecessarily. For example, programs like "The Road Runner" contained violence. However, because it contained other elements which defuse aggression, such as humor, the program generated little increase in inclination toward aggression.

Therefore, it is felt that more study is needed on whether programs such as this should be considered violent at all.

EFFECT OF VARIOUS VIEWING CONDITIONS

SCREEN SIZE

PURPOSE

To determine whether there's a difference in aggression generated between viewing violent material on a normal television screen vs. a large theatrical film.

PROCEDURE

"The Corrupters" was shown to boys under two viewing conditions: (a) on a normal television screen, (b) on a theatre screen in an auditorium. Pre-post tests were taken on the EPP.

RESULTS

It was found that violence viewed on the larger screen generated a greater increase in inclination toward aggression. It appeared that the boys were more attentive to the larger screen while they were playful watching TV, thereby reducing their attentiveness.

IMPLICATIONS

In evaluating studies based on naturalistic conditions, it's important to consider whether the programs viewed were on a normal size TV or on a larger theatrical screen.

COMMERCIALS

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of the inclusion or exclusion of commercials in a program on the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Boys were exposed to two episodes of "The Corrupters" and "The Untouchables." Each was shown with and without commercials. The boys were tested on the EPP before and after exposure to each episode.

RESULTS

In the tests without commercials, the boys showed a greater increase in inclination towards aggression than the episodes shown with commercials.

DISCUSSION

It appears that the inclusion of commercials breaks the concentration and involvement of the boys and dampens the buildup of excitement.

IMPLICATIONS

In evaluating studies based on naturalistic viewing conditions, it is important to consider whether the programs included commercials.

SCENE LENGTH

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of the length of a violent scene on the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Particular violent scenes were categorized by length: under 30 seconds, 31-60, 61-90, 91-120, 121-180, more than 180 seconds. Boys were tested before and after exposure to the scenes.

RESULTS

There does not appear to be a relationship between the length of a violent scene and the extent to which it generates increased inclination toward aggression. It appears that the important factor is the "quality" of the violence, especially its suddenness and unexpectedness.

DISCUSSION

It was felt that longer scenes would generate more inclination toward aggression than shorter ones. However, it was found that a short and unexpected violent scene can generate a great deal of inclination toward aggression. At the same time, if a scene is very long, but the tension overdrawn or the violence overdramatic, there appears to be a drop-off in inclination toward aggression. Also, it was noted that shorter violent scenes come early in a program and serve as an attention-getting device while longer violent scenes come later in the program and are more often used in the plot resolution.

IMPLICATIONS

It was felt that care should be taken in using sudden and unexpected violence in programs due to its apparent capacity to produce increased inclination toward aggression.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of different types of violence on the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Individual scenes in action-adventure programs were categorized in terms of the types of violence portrayed. The categories included: (a) physical violence vs. non-physical violence (chases, verbal), (b) killings/woundings in a fight vs. a non-injurious fight, (c) violence with weapons vs. violence without weapons. Boys were exposed to the programs and pre-post changes were measured on the EPP.

RESULTS

Different types of violence do have a different impact in generating increased inclination toward aggression.

DISCUSSION

Generally, scenes of physical violence produced a greater inclination in aggression than those scenes classed as non-physical violence. However, in the case of younger boys (7-10) physical violence generates increased inclination toward aggression while non-physical (verbal, chases) violence doesn't. In older boys (11-13) both physical and verbal violence generate similar levels of inclination toward aggression. This suggests that young children aren't as verbally sophisticated as older children. Findings also indicate that scenes where killings or woundings occur produce a greater increase in aggression than scenes in which fighting alone occurs. Violent scenes with weapons produce about the same level of inclination toward aggression as scenes without weapons. It's felt this is due to the brutal and personalized form of non-weapons violence-beatings with fists, kicking, etc.

IMPLICATIONS

Findings suggest that the types of violence used in a program can be altered to reduce levels of inclination toward aggression. The findings also suggest that different types of violent elements shouldn't be "lumped together." Caution might be used in depicting physical violence which is actually carried out and greater freedom might be exercised in portraying verbal violence where there is a threat of violence, but isn't actually carried out.

PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of program identification on inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Both action-adventure and children's programs were tested. First, to determine identification, children were asked if they felt that the programs were "for kids like me." Secondly, the children were tested on the EPP before and after viewing the programs.

RESULTS

Heightened identification with programs and characters portrayed in programs are associated with above-average increases in inclination toward aggression.

DISCUSSION

For both action-adventure and children's programs, a majority of the boys tested felt that the programs were "for kids like me." However, identification was higher for action-adventure programs. Children who felt that programs were directed at other than their age group were more apt to say that action-adventure programs were "for kids older than me" and children's programs were "for kids younger than me." Boys who felt programs were "for kids like me" registered a greater increase in inclination toward aggression than boys who felt that programs were directed at children either older or younger than themselves. Therefore, these findings help to explain why the action-adventure programs tested generated higher increases in inclination toward aggression than the children's programs tested. Boys identified more with the action-adventure programs and this heightened level of identification carried over to greater increases in inclination toward aggression. This identification is increased when younger characters are featured in programs.

There are several examples:

Two cartoons in which youngsters were prominently featured ("Johnny Quest" and "Smokey The Bear") both generated above-average increases in inclination toward aggression. In contrast, two cartoons which did not feature youngsters ("Sky Hawk" and "Road Runner") produced below-average increases in inclination toward aggression.

A "Mod Squad" episode which featured a child generated an increase in inclination toward aggression, while two episodes which did not feature a child did not produce an increase.

An episode of "The Rookies" evoked increased inclination toward aggression although it contained little violence. This was attributed to the fact that both the hero and the villain were younger.

An episode of "The FBI" did not produce much inclination toward aggression even though it was violent. This was attributed to the fact that there was little identification because the major characters were older.

Several programs which portrayed situations in which younger children were "threatened" by older adults yielded above-average increases in inclination toward aggression. This was more likely to occur when youngsters were confronted with high identification, stressful scenes which contained anxiety inducing elements.

IMPLICATIONS

Identification with programs and characters generate greater increases in inclination toward aggression than other programs. Therefore, identification in particular programs could be modified to alter the amount of inclination toward aggression produced.

HERO AND VILLAIN IDENTIFICATION

PURPOSE

To determine the relationship between children's identification with both heroes and villains and the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

First, boys completed a questionnaire which indicated character preferences. With these preferences, children were then tested on the EPP before and after viewing violent television content.

RESULTS

Boys identify more with heroes in both action-adventure and children's programs, although it is slightly higher in action-adventure. Also, when boys select heroes as their favorite character, there is a greater increase in inclination toward aggression than those who chose villains. The reason hypothesized for the higher identification in action-adventure than children's programs is the realistic content of the former.

DISCUSSION

The reason stated for the increase in inclination toward aggression is that although both heroes and villains engage in violent acts, the heroes generally survive and emerge victorious, while villains are usually punished. Therefore, boys may be more disposed to emulate violent heroes who do not get punished than villains who do. Also it was found that when children identify with innocent bystanders, there is an increase in inclination toward aggression. This is due to the child's anxiety being increased by the victimization of a helpless victim.

Finally, boys registered an above-average increase in inclination toward aggression when the hero was the victim and the villain the perpetrator. It was felt this reflects a tendency for boys to respond in a retaliatory fashion when the hero gets injured.

IMPLICATIONS

These findings suggest that the belief that identification with villains is bad may not be true. If anything, it is when children identify with heroes, not with villains, that increased inclination toward aggression usually takes place. Therefore, it is felt there should be equal concern about violence displayed by heroes than by villains as it is easier for

children to justify emulation when the "good guys" are doing it. A corollary implication is that some degree of identification with villains is not necessarily a bad thing; a more roundly depicted villain (as opposed to "bad guy" stereotype) may be useful, as long as the villain "gets it" at the end thereby serving as a deterrent to the increase in inclination toward aggression.

Also, since the study was primarily done with normal, white middle-class whites, it is felt that future studies should include minority groups as well as emotionally vulnerable children to see if the same pattern holds in relation to identification.

HERO AND VILLAIN PERCEPTION

PURPOSE

To determine the relationship between children's perception (image) of heroes and villains and the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

First, boys completed a questionnaire (negative-positive adjectives) in which they rated various characteristics associated with heroes and villains. Secondly, children were tested on the EPP before and after viewing violent television content and then hero/villain images were correlated.

RESULTS

Children associate more positive traits with heroes than with villains. Also, there are above-average increases in inclination toward aggression when boys select heroes than when they select villains as their favorite characters.

DISCUSSION

The relationship between character traits that boys attribute to heroes and villains and how much they want to be like them. Generally, for both heroes and villains, boys identify more readily with powerful, good-looking characters, than with weak, stupid ones. More specifically, boys want to be more like heroes who are powerful, strong and good-looking and less like heroes who are dumb, weak and scared. At the same time, while boys don't identify as strongly with villains, they want to be more like villains who are smart, powerful, brave and good-looking and less like villains who are dumb, weak and stupid.

The relationship between how a boy perceives the hero and his inclination toward aggression. When boys perceive heroes as powerful, cool and good-looking, they register an above-average increase in inclination toward aggression. When the villain is perceived as weak, dumb, scared and good-looking, children register an above-average increase in inclination toward aggression. When the villain is perceived as smart, strong and powerful, children manifest below-average increases in inclination toward aggression.

There are several reasons given for this. Children may manifest increased inclination toward aggression when they perceive the hero as powerful and good-looking because they identify more strongly with him. This stronger identity carries over into increased emulation. Secondly, when the villain is seen as weak, they might feel it's safer to manifest increased inclination toward aggression because they have less fear of retaliation. Finally, when children see heroes and villains as smart and clever, there is less increase in inclination toward aggression. This may be related to the idea that smart and clever people may be better able to use their minds more than their fists or weapons and, therefore, have less need to resort to violence to solve problems.

IMPLICATIONS

Because boys more readily identify with good-looking characters and this process of identification carries over into emulation in the form of increased inclination toward aggression, it is suggested that the trend toward "unhandsome" characters (Baretta, Columbo, Kojak) should continue. Also, the trend to use "brains" rather than "brawn" (by heroes and/or villains) to resolve conflict should be continued because of the fact that smart and clever heroes and villains are associated with lesser increases in inclination toward aggression. Finally, the more children see heroes as "all powerful" and villains as "not powerful," the greater the likelihood of children responding by manifesting increased inclination toward aggression. Therefore, in the interest of curtailing inclination toward aggression, it's probably better to maintain a balance of power between heroes and villains (although heroes should win out at the end), rather than having the balance lean more strongly toward heroes than villains.

TONE

PURPOSE

To determine the relationship between the tone (pace, realism) of a program and the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

The test was done in two steps: (a) boys were asked to indicate which descriptions best fit the program to which they were exposed (fast-moving, realistic), (b) boys were tested on the EPP before and after exposure.

RESULTS

Children like fast-moving, realistic programs better, but faster-moving, realistic programs are also associated with greater increases in inclination toward aggression than the slower and unrealistic (fantasy) oriented ones.

DISCUSSION

Boys viewed action-adventure programs as more exciting, realistic and fast-moving than children's programs. By contrast boys regarded children's programs as dumber, more boring and for younger children. However, faster-moving, realistic programs generate greater increases in inclination toward aggression than slower-moving, unrealistic programs. Also, there is a relationship between whether children view a program as violent and whether they find it an exciting program--excitement and violence usually go together. However, at the same time, many children viewed some programs as not violent while still finding them exciting.

IMPLICATIONS

Although violence contributes to children's feeling of excitement, there are many ways in which children can feel excited by a program, even when violence is absent. Therefore, it is felt it might be possible to produce programs which attempt to be both exciting and non-violent. Also, the findings suggest that greater caution is required for more realistic-oriented programs while greater latitude may be exercised for more fantasy-oriented programs.

ANXIETY

PURPOSE

To determine whether television programs create anxiety and, if so, whether this is related to an inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

First, children were asked whether or not particular scenes in programs "scared" them. Secondly, children were tested on the EPF before and after viewing the programs.

RESULTS

Although generally boys are not scared by television programs, there are some instances in which programs scare them. Also, they like scary programs better than others. At the same time, being scared does generate increased inclination toward aggression. However, humor can serve as a defuser of anxiety-inducing elements in a program.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that anxiety-producing elements need not be violent, but that a situation can be recognizable and identifiable for children and easily scare them. For example, an episode of "Kid Power" contained a scene in which a group of children broke a camera they borrowed from an adult. This produced high anxiety; consequently a higher inclination toward aggression. Also, the program "Night Stalker" created much anxiety, but little inclination toward aggression. This was due to the inclusion of humor which probably had a dampening effect on the inclination toward aggression. Note: The finding that children like programs that scared them is consistent with findings in the section entitled TONE.

IMPLICATIONS

Whether a program contains anxiety-producing elements is determined by two things: (a) content of the programs, (b) children's prior real-life experiences. However, programs which depict children in threatening situations have an above-average potential for evoking anxiety and thereby an increase in the inclination toward aggression. Therefore, while this condition should be watched, it's felt more work needs to be done to define the conditions and situations that evoke anxiety in children.

HUMOR

PURPOSE

To determine whether the inclusion of humor in a violent program will affect the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Two versions of one program were used: (a) unedited version containing all humorous and violent elements of a program, (b) edited version with an important humorous scene removed which followed a violent scene. Children were tested on the EPP before and after viewing.

RESULTS

Inclusion of humor in a violent program serves as a defuser of inclination toward aggression.

DISCUSSION

The edited version with the humorous scene removed generated a significantly higher increase in inclination toward aggression. For example, a violent episode of the "Night Stalker" produced only slight inclination toward aggression. This was attributed to the humor in the programs. Note: See section entitled ANXIETY for further results in this area.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggest that inclusion of humorous elements in otherwise all-dramatic action-adventure programs might help to ameliorate the effects of violent elements in such programs. Two methods were suggested on how it might be included in action-adventure programs to ameliorate the effects of violent elements: (a) to portray actions which are simultaneously both humorous and violent, (b) to intersperse humorous actions between the violent elements.

ACTIVITY EMULATION

PURPOSE

To determine the relationship between the desire to emulate activities in a program and the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

First, boys were asked how much they wanted to emulate various activities in both non-violent and violent programs. Secondly, they were tested on the EPP before and after viewing violent programs for pre-post changes in aggression.

RESULTS

Children are more desirous of emulating non-violent actions rather than violent actions in television programs. However, sizable portions of children do want to emulate violent actions. Also, an increase in inclination toward aggression is related to a desire to emulate violent actions.

DISCUSSION

Although there are differences in the desire for emulation between action-adventure and children's programs the results in each are parallel. In violent action-adventure programs the activity boys wanted to emulate most often was "shoot a gun." In non-violent action-adventure programs, the activity most cited was "ride a horse," "drive a car," and "fly a plane." In violent children's programs, the activity most cited was "tackle somebody in a football game." In non-violent children's programs it was "have a tree house," "camp out overnight," "fly a helicopter." However, minor wording changes in the questions produced different results. For example, many children expressed the desire "to shoot a gun." However, when it was worded as "to shoot a gun at someone," the percentage dropped off. Therefore, it's felt that children are more desirous of engaging in violent action in the abstract but not in the context of real-life interaction with other people. Finally, boys who want to emulate violent actions on the programs exhibited greater increased inclination toward aggression than boys who did not. Also, wanting or not wanting to emulate non-violent actions was less strongly related to increased inclination toward aggression. Generally, if boys get caught up in and want to emulate activities in a program, this increases their likelihood of exhibiting increased inclination toward aggression.

IMPLICATIONS

The most important thing is not that a program provides an activity to emulate, but whether it instructs on how to do it. For example, it's not a question of whether weapons should or should not be used in television programs. The question is on the manner in which they are used and whether they teach children how to use them.

AMOUNT OF VIOLENT ELEMENTS

PURPOSE

To determine if the amount of violent elements in a program is related to an increase in aggression.

PROCEDURE

Three different edited versions of "The Rookies" were used: high violence, medium and low. Children were tested on the EPP before and after viewing.

RESULTS

Children's inclination toward aggression was related to the version they screened. The high violence version generated the highest increase and the low version the lowest increase.

DISCUSSION

The children not only reacted more to the violent versions, but they also perceived the programs to be violent. In a related test, the children were asked to rate the programs on the amount of perceived violence. The programs rated highest also generated the most inclination toward aggression.

IMPLICATIONS

The reaction to violent television programs is not simply a function of the overall tonality (pace, realism) of the program, but also reflects the presence or absence of specific violent elements within a program. Greater or lesser levels of aggression can be generated by including more or fewer violent elements in a program. Therefore, it may be possible to alter the overall impact of a violent program by modifying or eliminating individual scenes within a program.

RESOLVED VS. UNRESOLVED PROGRAM ENDINGS

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of viewing a resolved vs. an unresolved program on the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Boys were exposed to an episode of "The Corrupters." It was shown in two forms: (a) a version that contained the program climax, (b) a version where the climax was omitted. There were pre-post tests on the EPP. This relates to the section: COMPLETE PROGRAMS VS. EXCERPTED VIOLENCE.

RESULTS

Whether the action is resolved or not plays a part in determining whether violence results in increased inclination toward aggression. It appears that resolved action results in an increase in inclination toward aggression while unresolved action doesn't.

DISCUSSION

In the resolved version (where the villain gets it) there's an increase in inclination toward aggression. The explanation given for the decrease in the unresolved version was (a) it seemed to leave the boys confused, (b) the boys might have identified with a youngster who died and were depressed that his death was unavenged.

IMPLICATIONS

It was felt that more research is needed in this area, particularly on programs considered to be "cliff-hangers," i.e., programs that end the first part of a program on an exciting note in order to entice viewers to tune in again next week.

REPEAT PROGRAMS

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of viewing repeat programs on the inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Children were tested on the EPP before and after viewing new programs and those previously seen.

RESULTS

Overall, it was felt that it made little difference on the inclination toward aggression whether a program had been seen previously.

DISCUSSION

It was felt that repeat showings of a program might have a dampening effect on the inclination toward aggression. At that time it was felt that children might experience less tension since they know what's coming up. However, although the findings were mixed, there appears to be no difference between the amount of inclination toward aggression generated between new and repeat programs.

IMPLICATIONS

Because of these findings it was felt that the most important criterion is the nature of the program rather than whether it is new or a repeat.

COMPLETE PROGRAMS VS. EXCERPTED VIOLENCE

PURPOSE

To determine the effect between viewing violent material shown in a complete program vs. viewing violent material excerpted from a program on the increase in inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Boys were exposed to two episodes of "The Corrupters" and "The Untouchables." Each was shown in two ways: (a) complete with occasional violent scenes, (b) incomplete with excerpts of violent scenes without connecting storyline. Pre-post tests on the EPP were taken. This test relates to the section: RESOLVED VS. UNRESOLVED PROGRAM ENDINGS.

RESULTS

Although the results indicated that there was no difference in an increase in inclination toward aggression produced between the two versions, it was felt the evidence was inconclusive.

DISCUSSION

For example, "The Corrupters" excerpts generated more inclination toward aggression than the complete programs, but "The Untouchables" complete program generated more inclination toward aggression than its excerpts. This was attributed to the feeling that some of the excerpted scenes were still meaningful and believable despite being taken out of context. Therefore, it produced a greater increase in inclination toward aggression. However, this theory was not tested under revised viewing conditions.

IMPLICATIONS

In evaluating studies based on naturalistic viewing conditions, it is important to consider whether the program was viewed in its entirety. Also, it's important to consider the "quality" of the violence tested. If some violent scenes have more identification than others, the reactions will be dissimilar.

NEWS PROGRAMS

PURPOSE

To determine the effect of violent material in television news programs on children's inclination toward aggression.

PROCEDURE

Boys were exposed to two different versions of a news program especially prepared for the experiment: (a) non-violent and violent news stories, (b) only non-violent. There was a pre-post test on the EPP.

RESULTS

For both versions there was an increase in inclination toward aggression, but there was little difference between the two. It was felt that because the children wanted to see entertainment, they registered an increase in inclination toward aggression when exposed to news programs. Another reason given for the similarity of results was that few of the violent scenes appeared to have any relevance and meaning to the children.

IMPLICATIONS

The results are inconclusive and more research is probably needed.

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIMENTS (PRO-SOCIAL)

OVERALL RESULTS

Effect of Pro-social Television Content on Social Perceptions

CONCLUSIONS

Exposure to television programs can alter children's social perceptions.

DISCUSSION

This is based on a series of experimental studies conducted under laboratory conditions, in which children's perception of ethnic, age, sex and occupation groups was measured before and after viewing pro-social televised content.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations on the pro-social aspects of the experiments parallel those stated under the anti-social section.

OCCUPATION

PURPOSE

To determine whether televised content can change children's social perceptions of occupations.

PROCEDURE

Children's perception was measured on an image dimension scale (e.g., smart/dumb) before and after viewing selected programs. Changes were noted. Boys and girls were both used, as was a control group which listened to a lecture.

RESULTS

Exposure to pro-social program content can positively (and negatively) affect children's social perception of occupational roles.

DISCUSSION

Children's perception of policeman was tested. Children were favorably disposed toward them and looked upon as hard-working and smart. After exposure to pro-social programs their image improved even more.

However, in further research both the policeman and reporter's occupational role was tested. In this case policemen were portrayed in both positive and negative manners. The manner in which they were portrayed related to how children perceived them after exposure. Reporters had a high image rating prior to exposure (but not as high as police). Exposure to favorable content resulted in increased positive feelings.

ETHNIC PERCEPTIONS

PURPOSE

To determine whether televised content can change children's social perceptions of selected ethnic groups.

PROCEDURE

Children rated various ethnic groups (blacks, Indians, Eskimos) on an image dimension scale (e.g., smart/dumb, clean/dirty) before and after viewing selected programs. Changes were noted. Boys and girls were both used, as was a control group which listened to a lecture.

RESULTS

Exposure to pro-social program content can positively (and negatively) affect children's social perception of ethnic groups.

DISCUSSION

Different programs were used for the test. In one year children had the most positive image of whites, followed by Indians, Chinese and blacks. Exposure to "Boom-Town Band" and "Kid Power" had differing results. "Boom-Town Band" was realistic and featured blacks and kids in a sympathetic manner. It had a significant impact on altering perceptions. On the other hand, "Kid Power," which did not have blacks in a central role, did not produce great changes. However, overall, there were positive changes in nearly all categories of the image dimension scale.

In another study, children had the most positive images of whites, followed by Indians, Eskimos, Chinese and blacks. The images of blacks, Eskimos and Indians were to be tested and specific programs were used for each. "Kodiak" created a marked improvement in the image of Eskimos. "Get Christie Love" did the same for the image of blacks. However, this change was more noticeable among girls than boys. At the same time, an episode of "The Night Stalker" was used which portrayed blacks in a negative manner. Children's images declined after exposure, especially among boys as the villain was black and male. "Nakia" produced only minor changes in children's image of Indians. This was attributed to the fact that the episode lacked ethnic clarity and the manner in which Indians were depicted wasn't as strong as it could have been.

Finally, in both years, changes in children's social perceptions tended to be the most marked in the areas where their images were least favorable.

SEX ROLES

PURPOSE

To determine whether televised content can change children's social perceptions of sex roles.

PROCEDURE

Children's sexual role perception was measured on an image dimension scale (e.g. smart/dumb, strong/weak) before and after viewing selected programs. Changes were noted. Boys and girls were both used as was a control group which listened to a lecture. Cartoons as well as an action-adventure program, "Get Christie Love," were used.

RESULTS

Exposure to pro-social program content does not appear able to affect children's sexual role perception.

DISCUSSION

Boys tended to rate boys higher than they rate girls, while girls generally rate girls higher than they rate boys. Also, boys are more likely than girls to be perceived as strong, brave, and leaders. Girls are more likely than boys to be regarded as smart, friendly, honest, clean and good. However, after exposure to a pro-social program, no changes were recorded.

There are several reasons given for the lack of change. First, the programs selected were considered inadequate. Cartoons are not realistic and "Get Christie Love" portrays a black woman which might be hard for white children to identify with. Also, it's suggested that sex role perceptions are more firmly anchored than ethnic perceptions and may be more difficult to alter.

AGE

PURPOSE

To determine whether televised content can change children's social perception of the elderly.

PROCEDURE

Children's perception of the elderly was measured on an image dimension scale (e.g. smart/dumb, clean/dirty) before and after viewing selected programs. Changes were noted. Boys and girls were studied as was a control group which listened to a lecture.

RESULTS

Exposure to pro-social program content can positively affect children's social perception of the elderly.

DISCUSSION

Children had less favorable images of the elderly in comparison to younger men and women. For example, they were perceived as less strong, brave and hard-working than younger men and women. However, exposure to a pro-social program (Kodiak) resulted in improvement in children's rating of older people. The rating went higher among boys (main character was male) and among older children (much of story was sophisticated and subtly portrayed).

TYPES OF CHILDREN STUDIED

In the study, 9,838 children were used. They ranged in age from 7-14 and also ranged in socio-economic status from lower to upper middle class. The children were primarily white; however, some blacks and Puerto Ricans were included. In the pro-social studies males and females were both used; in the anti-social studies males were primarily used. All children were recruited from a variety of public, private and parochial schools as well as boys' clubs YMCA, and Boy Scouts in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut area.

PROGRAMS USED

Action Adventure (Anti-Social)

Program	Segment
Mod Squad	"A Town Called Sincere" "Kicks, Inc." "My Name is Manolette" "Good Times Are Just Memories"
The Corrupters	"Journey Into Morning"
The Untouchables	"The Gang War"
The Rookies	"Dead Like a Lost Dream" "Get Ryker"
Assignment Vienna	"The Last Target"
The Delphi Bureau	"The Deadly Little Errand Project"
Streets of San Francisco	"The Thirty Year Bill" "Going Home"
Kung Fu	"King of the Mountain" "The Assassin"
Jigsaw	"The Bradley Affair"
The FBI	"The Jug Maker" "The Payoff"
Paul Lynde Show	"Howie's Inheritance"
Toma	"Crime Without Victim"
Get Christie Love	"Market For Murder"
Barbetta	"He'll Never See Daylight"
Caribe	"Plastic Pipeline"
S.W.A.T.	"Killing Around"
Six Million Dollar Man	"The Zombie"
Harry O	"Admiral's Lady"
The Untouchables	"The Gang War"

Specially Composed News Segment **35**

PROGRAMS USED

Children's Programs (Anti-Social)

Program	Segment*
Johnny Quest	"The Dragons of Ashida"
Sky Hawk	
Road Runner	
Smokey the Bear	
The Osmonds	"China"
Jackson 5	"It All Started With"
Funky Phantom	"Mudsy Joins the Circus"
Kid Power	"Don't Fake It" "Down On The Old Mill Pond"
Super Friends	"The Mysterious Male"
Goober	"Mummy Knows Best"
Lassie's Rescue Ranger	"Grisley"
Yogi's Gang	"Mr. Bigot"
Brady Kids	"A Funny Thing Happened On..."
After School Special	"Psst...Hammerman's After You"
Devlin	"Victory Over Fear"
Korg	"Running Fight"

*Where applicable

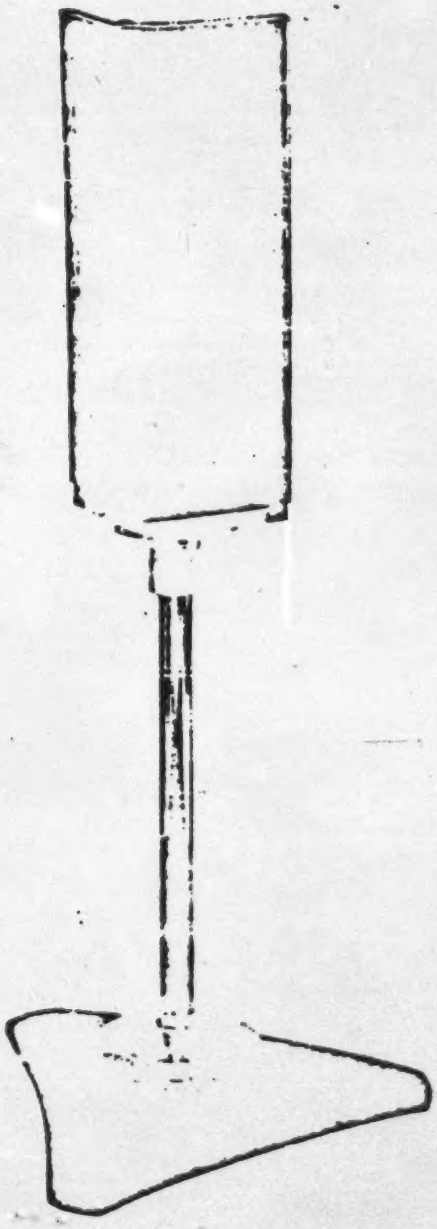
PROGRAMS USED

Action-Adventure (Pro-Social)

Program	Segment*
Get Christie Love	"Pawn Ticket For Murder" "Market For Murder
Nakia	"The Non-Person"
Kodiak	"Red Snow, White Death"
Night Stalker	"The Zombie"
Boom-Town Band	Unaired Pilot
Eagan	

*Where applicable

ELECTRONIC POUNDING PLATFORM

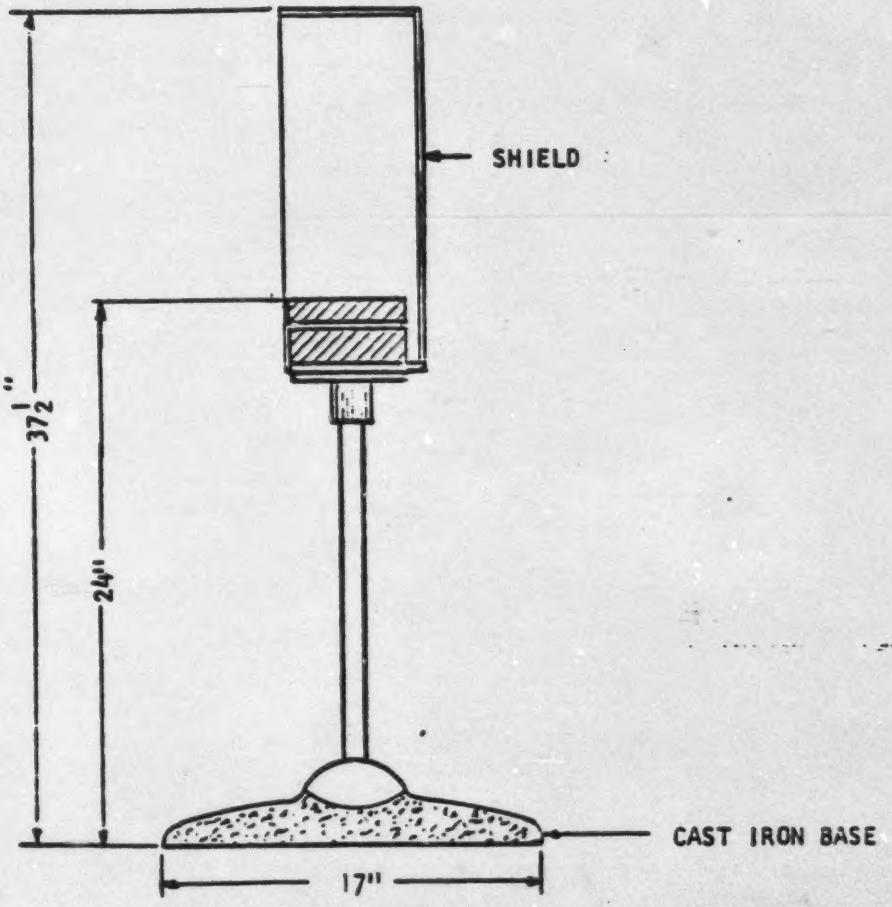


APPENDIX B

Technical Description of the Electronic Pounding Platform

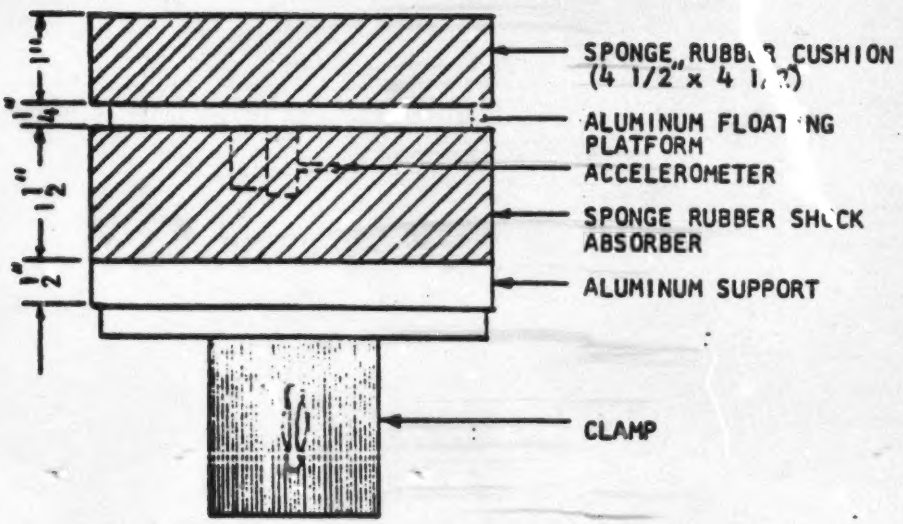
ELECTRONIC POUNDING PLATFORM

(OVERALL VIEW)



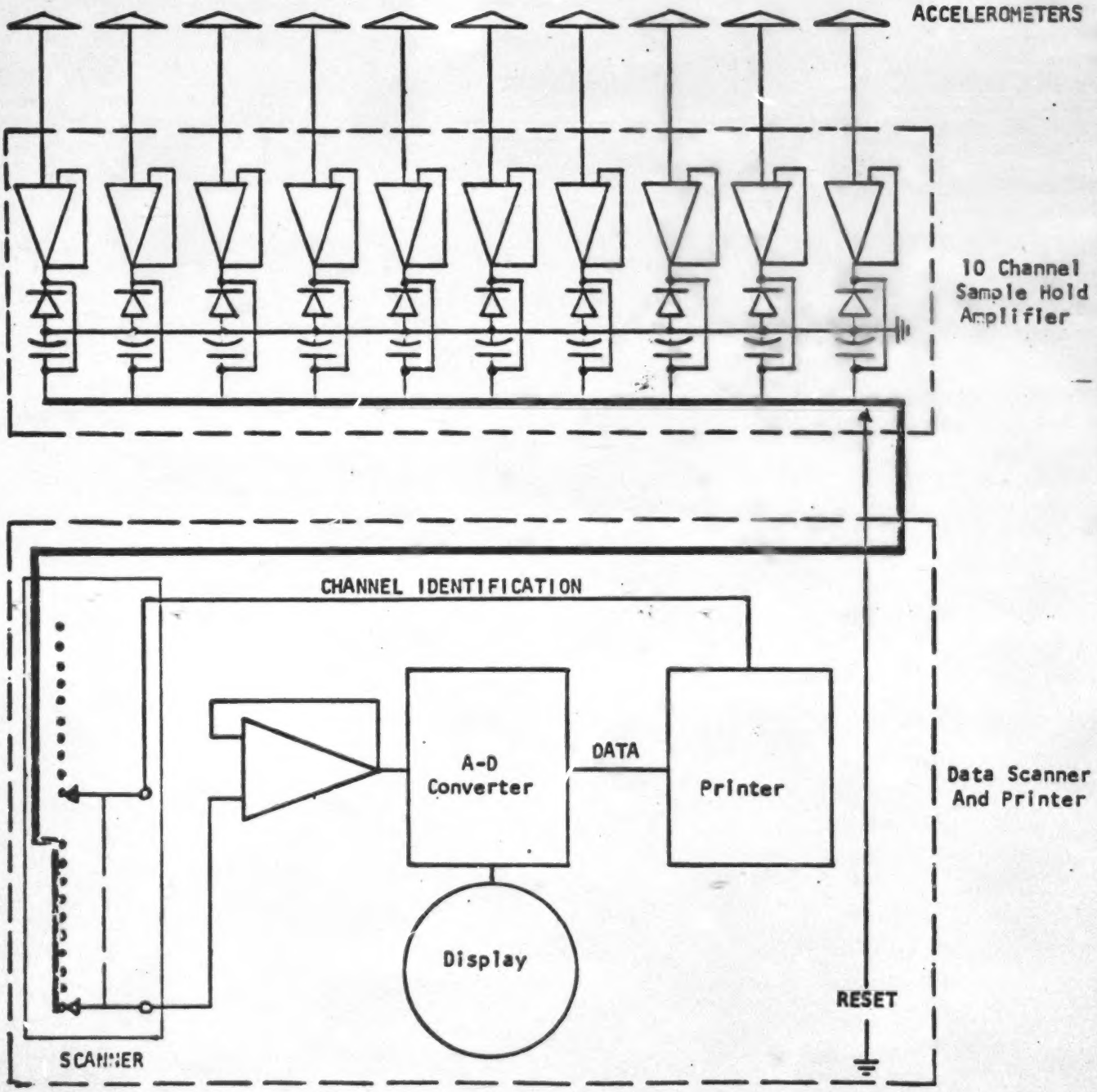
ELECTRONIC POUNDING PLATFORM

(RESPONSE HEAD)



ELECTRONIC POUNDING PLATFORM

(BLOCK DIAGRAM OF CIRCUIT FOR
GROUP TESTING SYSTEM)



ELECTRONIC POUNDING PLATFORM

(COMPONENT LIST FOR GROUP TESTING SYSTEM)

ACCELEROMETERS - Astatic 26 Crystal Phonograph Cartridge

AMPLIFIERS - Helcor 1861 Operational Amplifier

RECTIFIERS - Motorola MD A920-1 Bridge

CAPACITORS - Cornell Dubilier WMF 1W4 4.0 μF

SCANNER - Automatic Electric RW-11V Stepper Relay

A-D CONVERTER AND DISPLAY - Datascan 320-V4 Digital Panel Meter

PRINTER - Practical Automation CMMMP-5 Minimoduprint